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THE NEGRO AND AMERICAN LIBERTY.

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CRISPUS ATTUCKS. (From the "Bostonian.")

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WHAT THE NEGRO HAS DONE FOR LIBERTY IN AMERICA.

BY PROF. JOHN MOORE.

IT seems like a paradox to speak of the Negro as efficiently related to the cause of freedom in America. He was brought here and forced into slavery, in which condition he was held most of the time since the country was settled. He was treated not as a human being, but as property to be used only for the advantage of his oppressors. Some became free, but North as well as South, they were largely shut out from the opportunities for industry and general improvement of their condition. They were under a social ban and not recognized as equal to their fellowmen of a different complexion. After suffering from such treatment for generations it could hardly be expected that Negroes would feel much enthusiasm in the cause of popular liberty on account of the wrongs they suffered, and the seeming hopelessness of ever getting their rights.

But notwithstanding this the colored man displayed an intense love of freedom, and a willingness to fight and make sacrifice for the common cause of human liberty, even when his own prospect of sharing in it, was not promising. White men, generally assuming that they had the special right to the monopoly of that blessing.

In this the Negro showed a magnanimity and noble manhood, never surpassed by those of any other race. The time is coming when due justice will be done to our African brothers by the patriotic historian, which has not yet been accorded.

It would require volumes to record what the colored man has done for the cause of liberty in this country. A presentation of a few of the facts cannot but tend to fire our patriotism as well as revive in our memories the important part our colored country-men have acted in achieving the liberties we now enjoy.

In 1770 an important event took place in Boston. There was a massacre on King Street now called State. Several men were shot by British soldiers. The most conspicuous figure there was Crispus Attucks, a Negro, who lost his life. Years before he had been a slave in Framingham and escaped from his master. Several advertisements were published in the *Boston Gazette*, with ample rewards for his capture; but he was not seized. Twenty years after he came to Boston. When the British soldiers were insulting and oppressing the true American patriots, Attucks appeared as the leader to the first resistance to their tyranny. On March 5th, 1770, Attucks as the leader shouted: "The way to get rid of these soldiers is to attack the main guard; strike at the root, there is the nest." When the British soldiers fired, Attucks was the first to fall. The body of this hero with that of another who fell, lay in Fanueil Hall, while others were buried from their homes. The funeral was said to have been the largest ever known in this country. Daniel Webster said: "From that moment we may date the severance of the British Empire."

At the battle of Bunker Hill, Major Pitcairn was killed, which proved to be a serious loss to the British. It was he who was the chief commander of the forces that went out to Lexington and Concord at the time of the famous fight there. He fell at the hands of private Peter Salem of Colonel Nixon's regiment of the Continental Army.

This Negro soldier's claim to this honor could not be disputed. There was another Negro soldier who distinguished himself, Salem Poor, and displayed such valor that fourteen American officers called the attention of Congress to his merits. The memorial was dated at Cambridge, December 5, 1775, and stated "that under our own observation, we declare that a Negro man called Salem Poor, of Colonel Frye's regiment, Captain Ames' company, in the late battle at Charlestown behaved like an experienced officer as well as an excellent soldier. To set forth the particulars of his conduct would be tedious. We would only beg leave to say, in the person of this said Negro, centres a brave and gallant soldier. The reward due to so great and distinguished a character we submit to the Congress."

The army organized at Cambridge under General Washington, had from the start colored men in it. The historian Bancroft states that free Negroes stood in the ranks by the side of white men. All through the Revolution the colored man performed a very important part, for which very little credit has ever been given him.

At the battle of Long Island in 1776, Negroes fought bravely, and many fell. Theodore Parker, once in alluding to the discovery of the remains of these, remarked: "Now after seventy-five years have passed by, the bones of the forgotten victims of the Revolution are shovelled up by Irish laborers, carted off, and shot into the sea, as rubbish of the town. Had they been white men's relics, how they would have been honored with sumptuous burial anew, and the purchased prayers and preaching of Christian divines! Now they are the rubbish of the street."

In the war of 1812, the Negro performed heroic service on land and on the water. Commodore Perry said that Negroes in the navy seemed to be absolutely insensible to danger. General Jackson gave them great credit for their efficient services. He solicited and welcomed them into the service of their country. In September, 1814, he

issued a proclamation, which contained the words: "As sons of freedom, you are now called upon to defend our most inestimable blessing. As Americans your country looks with confidence to her adopted children for a valorous support."

In the war of the Rebellion the colored man performed a very prominent and heroic part. This furnished on a large scale an opportunity to show his loyalty and courage, and he met the highest expectations which had been cherished by his friends.

For two years the war had been carried on by the North on the principle of saving the Union without interfering with slavery, which was really at the bottom of the whole trouble. While that policy was pursued the prospect of success seemed dark. Slaves in several cases ran away and came into the Union forces for protection, but in several instances were sent back. General Butler after awhile declared that kind of property to be contraband of war. After that the rebels did not have many of the "contrabands" forced back by our soldiers. After the proclamation of emancipation was issued, victory seemed to turn on the side of the Union forces, and defeat on the other side. That step for the freedom of 4,000,000 of slaves, was announced as an act of justice and a military necessity.

On the side of the North, negroes for a considerable time had not been allowed to use a shovel or shoulder a musket in behalf of the cause of freedom. Some predicted that if so allowed they would not begin to compare in efficiency with the white man. The experiment proved a grand success.

One of the most joyous days of my life, was that in which the first Negro regiment marched through the streets of Boston, after having been reviewed on the Common. That was the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth, which made such a noble record afterwards. This was in May, 1863. Four flags were presented to it, one by young colored ladies of Boston; a national ensign presented by a society of colored ladies;

another by ladies and gentlemen friends of the regiment; and another flag by relatives of the late Lieut. Putnam. One of the emblematic banners had inscribed on it: "Liberty, Loyalty and Unity." This regiment did noble service for their country. General Strong said of the Negro troops that charged on Fort Wagner: "The Fifty-fourth did well and nobly, only the fall of Colonel Shaw prevented them from entering the fort. They moved up as gallantly as any troops could, and with their enthusiasm they deserve a better fate."

Generally the Negro troops acquitted themselves most creditably as soldiers. Stanton, Secretary of War, said of them at Petersburg: "The hardest fighting was done by the black troops. The parts they stormed were the worst of all. After the affair was over, Gen. Smith went to thank them, and tell them he was proud of their courage and dash. He says they cannot be exceeded as soldiers."

There were in all 178,975 Negro soldiers in the United States Volunteers, and of these 38,847 were killed, wounded and missing. They took part in 449 battles. Besides the large military force there were 150,000 Negro laborers in other departments. When Cincinnati was threatened with an invasion, 706 colored citizens volunteered to construct military roads and fortifications, and were known as "The Black Brigade of Cincinnati." Many of the members afterwards entered military service. Had I space I might speak of the brilliant achievements of Robert Small and others on the sea. Of William Tillman the *New York Tribune* said: "To this colored man was the nation indebted for the first vindication of its honor on the sea."

The Negro has two elements in his nature which render him specially susceptible to civilization and patriotism, namely, the religous sentiment and music. Without these there cannot be an exalted patriotism. During the Rebellion the colored people of the South had as by a sort of inspiration an impression that they were going to be freed. They sang and prayed with that idea before them. They believed

that "Father Linkum" was to be their Moses, and they would soon be set at liberty. Under the influence of this they were patient and hopeful. They prayed for the success of the Northern army, and their songs were inspired by the love and hope of freedom.

I will conclude by mentioning an incident which occurred on old Fort Plantation, Port Royal. There was a grove there of live oaks, in one of which was a seat, on which a Boston minister had sat while writing a book on the beauties of slavery, called the "South-side View." On the first day of January, 1863, the commanding officer of the Union forces appointed a meeting in that grove, at which the declaration of emancipation would be read. There was quite a program marked out, but which was somewhat interrupted by a remarkable incident. When the proclamation was read, the many Negroes present suddenly broke out singing the national hymn: "My country 'tis of thee; Sweet land of liberty." That hymn they never could sing before, and now that they were free they sang it with swelling hearts; but how they learned it was unknown. Their hearts thrilled with joy at the thought of being free, and rose in gratitude to God.